

Extension of the Gulf of Mexico Sector Separation Sunset Provision

(Reef Fish Amendment 45)

Frequently Asked Questions

December 2016



What does Amendment 45 do?

- Extends red snapper recreational sector separation measures from the end of the 2017 fishing year (December 31, 2017) to the end of the 2022 fishing year (December 31, 2022).

What is sector separation?

- Sector separation was implemented in May 2015 through Amendment 40 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico.
- This action separated the recreational red snapper sector into two components:
 - The federal for-hire component is comprised of all for-hire operators with a valid or renewable federal reef fish charter vessel/headboat permit.
 - The private angling component is comprised of private recreational anglers and other for-hire operators who do not have a federal reef fish charter vessel/headboat permit.
- Each component has specific sub-quotas, annual catch targets, and accountability measures.
- The purpose of Amendment 40 was to:
 - Increase the stability of the federal for-hire component of the recreational sector;
 - Provide increased flexibility in future management of the entire recreational red snapper harvesting sector;

Definitions

For-hire refers to charter vessel and headboat operations.

Annual catch target is the acceptable level of landings that provide a buffer, if needed, for management uncertainty.

Accountability measures are actions taken if the annual catch limit or quota is exceeded.

- Reduce the chance of recreational quota overruns, which could threaten the rebuilding plan for the red snapper stock.
- Amendment 40 also established a sunset provision where the sector separation provisions would expire at the end of the 2017 fishing year (December 31, 2017).

Why was the three-year sunset provision put in place in Amendment 40?

- The three-year sunset provision was considered long enough to allow the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) time to explore other possible management measures, like regional management, that could replace sector separation.
- The three-year time period was considered short enough to create some urgency by the Council to consider other possible management measures to improve red snapper management.

Why did the Council vote to extend the sunset provision?

- The Council is currently working to develop and approve actions to address the management of charter vessel and headboat fishing within the federal for-hire component.
- These amendments are not expected to be effective until after the December 31, 2017, expiration of the Amendment 40 provisions.

Links to additional information on red snapper management and rulemaking.

- You may obtain electronic copies of Amendment 45 and the final rule from the NOAA Fisheries Web site:
http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2016/am45/index.html
 or the e-Rulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov/>.
- Information on Amendment 40 and rulemaking can be found at:
http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2013/am40/index.html.
- An overview on red snapper recreational management in the Gulf of Mexico can be found at:
http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/red_snapper/index.html.